1. **Introduction – Why is Ethnic Unity Hard?**
2. The United States of America is a nation of nations.
3. Since our nation’s beginning, many different ethnic groups have come to our shores, crossed borders to find a better life, for economic, social, political and religious motives.
4. Yet mixing the various ethnic groups has been very difficult to achieve throughout this nation’s history even in Christian churches of all denominations.
5. Let’s explore some reasons why ethnic unity is hard and ways to overcome barriers to cross-cultural fellowship and ethnic unity within the church.
6. **Our human nature is to seek out people who are similar to our culture and interests.**
7. We naturally develop friendships, business relationships, marriages based on shared interests and common social, economic and ethnic backgrounds.
8. It becomes a problem in the church and in our personal lives when we give exclusive preference to those of our common ethnic or socio-economic heritage at the cost of building relationship across social ethnic barriers developed by society in general.
9. Ethnic exclusivity is a problem when we belittle, mock, ridicule, marginalize and intentionally exclude ethnic groups different than our own.
10. **Our region has a powerful and influential history of ethnic separation.**
11. Throughout its history metro Detroit has had many incidents of ethnic strife and divisions.
12. First between French and Native Americans, then English against French, then divisions between the various European ethnic groups such as the Irish, Scotts, Germans, Poles, followed by conflict with African-Americans, marginalization of Middle Easterners, Latin-Americans and the various Asian nations.
13. Metro Detroit suffered through several mass ethnic disturbances, including ones involving African-Americans in 1863, 1943 and 50 years ago in 1967.
14. During the 1920’s Detroit almost elected a Ku Klux Klan member as mayor, a cross was burned in Cadillac Square in that decade and the division between African-Americans and European descended residents grew deeper, stronger and violent through the rest of the 20th century.
15. This division affected the perceptions of area families, companies, the socio-economic and urban development of the suburbs of Wayne, Oakland, Washtenaw, Livingston and Macomb counties and the city proper of Detroit.
16. The results of these ethnic conflicts continue to affect our region and population into our time.
17. **Our nation has a legacy of fear and separation of different ethnic groups.**
18. This started during colonial times and only grew stronger through the continuation of slavery economic dynamics after independence and contributed greatly to our civil war.
19. Even after the civil war, ethnic strife and the socio-economic marginalization of various ethnic groups such as African-Americans and Latinos was legalized and institutionalized.
20. The consequences of laws and governmental policies affected our nation’s development into the 20th century and impacted the doctrinal and social development of the Christian Church regardless of denomination.
21. **Yet in spite of the powerful social forces that continue to influence the church into our time, the church of Jesus Christ is biblically defined as a union of all people groups Gal 3:26-28.**
22. God calls all people of all ethnic groups to place their faith in him. This is not an exclusive call to a particular people group alone.
23. Believers are called to live in harmony across ethnic and socio-economic lines, **1 Pet 3:8**,
24. To serve, worship and make disciples together not separately, not opposing one another.
25. Believers are called to demonstrate to the world how the kingdom of God operates differently and in contrast to the way the nations of this world act.
26. Peter realized directly from God that discrimination was sinful **Acts 10:27-28.**
27. This is not a mere opinion. It is a direct command from God: no ethnic divisions.
28. James states that believers obey God by bridging the social and ethnic gaps that some believers have reinforced and continue to hold on to and have refused to name it sin. **James 2:8-9.**
29. Part of seeking ethnic harmony is to seek the good of others especially in the household of faith **1 Cor 10:24**,
30. Believers can’t look only after own interests. Mixing with other ethnicities, socio-economic groups is being biblical not politically or theologically liberal. It is a public testimony of our worship and obedience to the Creator. **Rom 15:2**
31. Our calling is to bring people into God’s kingdom, to demonstrate that his kingdom doesn’t submit to human culture and divisions and that it is alien to this world’s demands and preferences.
32. Paul states that the Church was meant to be diverse, have different gifts, talents, insights. **1 Cor 12:12**
33. Differences are God’s intentional design, not by accident, not according to human philosophy.
34. A healthy church needs differences because everyone cannot be the same. We all have different tasks to accomplish, different ministries to carry out which require persons with different gifts, skills and ethnic backgrounds.
35. We need and belong to each other **Rom 12:5**. We cannot exclude, mock, disrespect, others who are not the same our preferred ethnic group or identity.
36. **Believers are required to offer hospitality to each other, 1 Pet 4:9**
37. The Koine Greek word for hospitality is *Philoxenia*, love of the stranger, hospitality is an integral and required aspect of serving God.
38. It is more than providing Martha Stewart décor and servings. It involves care, protection, service, investment in time and interest.
39. It is the opposite of *xenophobia*, fear of the stranger.

**VII.Local churches should not seek to be intentionally ethnically and socially the same or to separate from others with different ethnicity.** **Rom 12:16**

1. As stated previously this is very hard to do. Our basic human nature is to seek homogeneity.
2. Ethnic and/or socio-economical homogeneity is the easiest, fastest way to grow a church.
3. An ethnically and/or socio-economically diverse church is not easy.
4. It can provoke conflict, slow numerical and economic growth, but our biblical assignment is to reflect kingdom principles not perpetuate human preferences and comfort.

**VIII.The New Jerusalem will not be a bland sameness. Rev 21:24-26**

1. Contrary to popular notions, the Nations do not lose their identity, ethnicity in heaven.
2. God loves our human difference. Our differences will add to the flavor of worship, joy, creative expression in heaven because he is a creative God.
3. **Therefore we are to overcome the difficulty of ethnic separation.**
4. We should confess our personal sins of prejudice and fear. **1 John 1:9**
5. We can learn the history, culture and language of other ethnic groups in our metro area.
6. We can seek out personal friendship, business relationships and neighbors who are not of our own personal preferential ethnic group.
7. We can not only go on mission trips to other nations but seek those same ethnic groups in our metro area.
8. Less than 1% of Arabic speakers are evangelicals in our state. Less than 2% of Latinos are evangelicals in our state.
9. There are so many of South and Eastern Asian decent that have yet to have the gospel explained to them so that they can enter God’s kingdom.
10. **We are to be friends, welcoming, serving, encouraging those who worship God** **Ps 119:63.**
11. The recent movie, *Hidden Figures*, remind us of our past division and necessity to overcome institutional and personal ethnic barriers to accomplish great achievements.
12. Since the 1950’s we have seen great progress but our nation and the church are still divided. Why?
13. An Alt. Right leader was interviewed on the NPR in August 2016.
14. He stated that our nation should not continue to force civil rights and integration.
15. He cited the example of our nation’s churches as proof for his assertion. We do not naturally mix and have not since the civil rights revolution of the 1960’s.
16. Therefore he concluded our nation should not be forced to integrate. Why is the church his proof for continuing ethnic separation?
17. **Our challenge for our city and nation.**
18. The household of faith is called to cross human barriers: to love, honor, support, build up, understand, appreciate, and seek out those who are not of the same ethnicity and mix with each other regardless of socio-economic status or ethnicity. **Gal 5:13-15**
19. This is our testimony to a bitterly divided nation, to a world without Christ’s love.
20. Ethnic unity is very hard, but Christ’s people can overcome our human nature by the power of the Holy Spirit who transforms us to conform to Christ.
21. We are the kingdom of God. Our call is to preach the gospel, to disciple the nations in our midst.
22. Now is the time to shed the power of the past.
23. Now is the time to demonstrate to our city our obedience to Christ.
24. Now is time to show that believers do not follow the patterns of this world.
25. Now is the time to present the gospel and disciple the nations next door.
26. Now is time to give this world a taste of heaven. Now is the time.

|  |
| --- |
| All verses are NIV 2011 |
| **Gal 3:26-28. 26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** |
| **1 Pet 3:8 8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.** |
| **Acts 10:27-28. 27While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.** **28 He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.** |
| **James 2:8-9. 8If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 9But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.** |
| **1 Cor 10:24, 24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.** |
| **Rom 15:2 2Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.** |
| **1 Cor 12:12 12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.** |
| **Rom 12:5. so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.** |
| **1 Pet 4:9 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.** |
| **Rom 12:16 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.** |
| **Rev 21:24-26 24The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth *will bring their splendor into it.* 25On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26*The glory and honor of the nations* will be brought into it.** |
| **1 John 1:9 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.** |
| **Ps 119:63. 63 I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.** |
| **Gal 5:13-15 13You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” k 15If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.** |